

ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation envisions a California that manages, stewards, and conserves its water and land to support a resilient environment and healthy communities. This snapshot, prepared as the Foundation nears conclusion in 2020, documents essential aspects of the Environment Program's land portfolio.



Courtesy of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land portfolio

 **S. D. BECHTEL, JR.
FOUNDATION**
STEPHEN BECHTEL FUND

The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation invests in California's protected lands network to enhance local communities, preserve wildlife habitat, and provide recreational opportunities for all. In tandem, the Foundation works to increase conservation on private and unprotected lands throughout California.

Goals

Advance the durability and relevance of California's protected lands network by bolstering capacity and supporting coordinated land management.

Expand conservation through new tools and innovations that align incentives and remove barriers to wildlife and habitat stewardship, especially on private and unprotected lands throughout California.

Approach

- ▶ Implement the Parks Forward Commission's recommendations for revitalizing state parks.
- ▶ Demonstrate successful approaches for large-landscape stewardship across a wide range of partners.
- ▶ Demonstrate new models to align incentives and remove barriers to conservation, with emphasis on bird-friendly land management and private landowner engagement.
- ▶ Integrate wildlife and habitat conservation into land-use planning, flood protection, infrastructure building, and other systems.

Progress

Enhanced stewardship of protected lands

- ✓ **California state parks reinvigorated for the 21st century.** The California Department of Parks and Recreation completed institutional reforms to gain new relevance and abilities to respond to future challenges.
- ✓ **New state parks partner organization created.** Parks California launched as a nonprofit focused on supporting state parks and attracting new donors.
- ✓ **Public-private collaborations took hold.** A range of partners catalyzed and improved cross-jurisdictional, cross-sector approaches to managing large landscapes.

Expanded conservation through new tools and innovations

- ✓ **Regional Conservation Investment Strategies launched.** Ten regions, involving ten million acres (10% of California) engaged landowners and infrastructure agencies to guide better results.
- ✓ **Migratory bird habitat expanded and enhanced.** Migratory Bird Conservation Partnership programs ensure that 100,000+ acres are annually available for migratory birds in California.
- ✓ **Key agencies built conservation into their core processes.** County land-use planning departments and flood control agencies shifted their approaches to integrate conservation.



Lessons Learned

- **Public-private partnerships catalyze important innovations and progress.** When California's Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Wildlife wanted to implement new policies, they needed outside partners and experts who could shape innovations and have the flexibility to demonstrate new approaches. The Foundation supported these public-private partnerships through sustained commitments and saw bold advances. This work can be challenging for funders, as systems change and innovations call for sustained engagement and adaptive approaches.
- **Make conservation part of other people's business.** During the worst months of California's drought, incentives to private farmers created some of the only habitat available to millions of migratory birds. This example illustrates the value of developing the tools and approaches other systems need to make conservation part of their business. The Pacific Flyway and the millions of migratory birds traveling it each year are globally significant, and sustaining it requires coordinated efforts across large scales.
- **Stewardship across jurisdictions is vital to the future of conservation.** The experience in California indicates that independent actors can achieve more effective stewardship of large landscapes through collective approaches. Ecosystems function at large scale and don't stop at jurisdictional boundaries; stewardship should do the same. Climate change will exacerbate the need for collaborative management.

Opportunities

Flood control agencies, transportation planners, and other key players want to incorporate wildlife and habitat goals into their work.

The Regional Conservation Investment Strategies Program has potential to better align infrastructure and conservation goals, providing replicable examples for use in locales throughout the U.S. "Greenprints" and other voluntary tools are helping regions plan better. These integrative approaches are means to help communities meet multiple needs.

Incentives are bringing private landowners into conservation.

Targeting public conservation funding can help unlock the significant potential of farms, range lands, and working forests to provide important habitat to sustain wildlife.

Stewardship of large-scale protected lands via collaboration is an increasingly proven strategy.

Conservation policymakers, funders, advocates, and agencies can align systems and finances to further develop this approach.

Resources

Achieving the benefits of partnership: Independent researchers identified 11 interdependent, scalable impacts that partnerships create, demonstrating the value of collaborative efforts.

- Based on a California partnership known as **One Tam**, research findings are presented as a **Partnership Impact Model**™ that can serve cross-jurisdictional stewardship networks, informing their efforts to start, build, and sustain healthy partnerships – and scale up impact. The Model's attributes are applicable to a wide range of collaborations.
- An **evaluation guide** was created to help multi-sector partnerships that are focused on long-term, systems-level results better define, measure, and evaluate impact.

Sharing Foundation insights: S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation staff offer perspective, lessons learned, and suggestions for other funders through two reflections:

- Advancing durable and relevant **protected lands**
- Expanding **conservation** through new tools and innovations



The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation invests in a productive, vibrant, and sustainable California through two program areas – Education and Environment. Learn more and access the series of program snapshots and reflections: sdbjrfoundation.org.

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